

METHOD FOR FORMING MENUS

The invention relates to a method for forming menus in an electronic device according to the preamble of the appended claim 1. The invention also relates to a graphical user interface (GUI) according to the preamble of the appended claim 8. In addition, the invention relates to a device according to the preamble of the appended claim 12, and to a system according to the preamble of the appended claim 17, and to a software program according to the preamble of the appended claim 21, and to a storage medium according to the preamble of the appended claim 22.

At present, mobile phones provide various types of functions in addition to the basic call making/receiving function. Typical examples of the functions include telephone number directories, message manager, electronic organizer, phone manager, image manager and many more. In order to use any of such functions, many mobile phones also comprise a graphical user interface (GUI).

Typically a display of a graphical user interface comprises different kinds of visual elements like menus, icons and other elements. The term 'menu' will be used hereinbelow to refer to of a list from which the user may select an operation to be performed. Usually the menu is a graphical component containing at least one functional element and it is capable of indicating the selected functional element and activating it. For the navigation between these visual elements there is typically some kind of a control device, such as a navigation key, soft keys, a joystick or a touch screen.

The present graphical user interfaces rely on presenting information in pictorial form. In one of the most common type of a graphical user interface visual elements form a list, which may be used for several purposes. For example, in imaging phones (such as Nokia 3650) the contents of the phone's photo gallery (or "Images") can be presented by means of the list. Usually each item of the list consists of a thumbnail image and a label of the item for identification purposes. In a

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typical list these images and labels are positioned on top of each other and the user scrolls the list up and down by using a 2-way input device. In these solutions the list may consist of only a few larger images and labels or a larger number of small thumbnail images and labels.

5 Consequently, if the user wants to use larger images he or she is able to see only a little section of the list on the display. If the user wants to see longer section of the list, he or she sees very small images and it is usually very difficult to recognize items from these small thumbnails. The possibility to see an image often enables faster recognition, when

10 compared to reading, wherein the size of the image becomes more important since larger images can provide richer details.

To solve these problems a graphical user interface with a grid-like array has been developed, where many items are shown on top of

15 each other and next to each other. Thus the user can see a larger section of the list, and labels and images of items have quite practical sizes. Because the grid consists of many columns and rows a multiway input device, at least a 4-way input device, is required. Further more the use of this kind of list is in many solutions quite slow, because the

20 user must navigate in many different directions. Another problem in the matrix presentation is that the item labels are often short because the area for displaying them is very limited. Therefore, labels are often presented with small-sized font, which may render the reading of their content difficult.

25 Accordingly, the present invention relates to a user-friendly menu forming method in an electronic device that substantially eliminates one or more problems resulting from the limitations and disadvantages of the related art.

30 The primary aim of the present invention is to present a method in which a user friendly navigation function is integrated in a well-defined menu structure.

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To attain this purpose, the method according to the invention is primarily characterized in what will be presented in the characterizing part of the independent claim 1.

- 5 The invention further relates to a graphical user interface (GUI), which is primarily characterized in what will be presented in the characterizing part of the independent claim 8.

- 10 The device according to the invention, in turn, is primarily characterized in what will be presented in the characterizing part of the independent claim 12.

- 15 The system according to the invention is primarily characterized in what will be presented in the characterizing part of the independent claim 17.

- 20 The software program according to the invention, in turn, is primarily characterized in what will be presented in the characterizing part of the independent claim 21.

- The storage medium according to the invention is primarily characterized in what will be presented in the characterizing part of the independent claim 22.

- 25 The other dependent claims will present some preferred embodiments of the invention.

- 30 Additional advantages, objects and features of the invention will be set forth in part in the description hereinbelow and in part they will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon examination of the following. The objectives and other advantages of the invention may be realized and attained by the structure particularly pointed out in the written description and claims hereof as well as in the appended drawings.

- 35 To attain the objectives and advantages mentioned above, the menu forming method according to the invention is characterized in that at

least three display areas that are substantially adjacent to each other in a first direction are formed for at least two function elements. Each function element consists of information in text format and in some kind of visual format (for example images, photos, pictures, drawings etc.,
5 for which the term "image" will be used hereinbelow). The image information is displayed in said first direction on the outermost display areas. The identifying information (for example textual string, a number, a graph, etc., for which the term "label" will be used hereinbelow) is displayed on at least one display area between said
10 outermost display areas in such a manner that the label contained in the first function element and the label contained in the second function element are positioned at least substantially next to each other in a second direction substantially perpendicular to said first direction. Usually the first direction is the horizontal direction and the second
15 direction is the vertical direction in the display on the screen of the device.

One main idea of the invention is to display as large images as possible while leaving a reasonable space available for the item label.
20 Although the area for the item label is reduced, often seeing the image and its details enables faster recognition than reading its name, which makes the image size more important.

One embodiment of the present invention enables displaying twice as
25 many large thumbnail images in the same space as in a similar list where the list items do not "overlap". In addition, the invention preserves interaction with a 2-way input device. This may make the list suitable for mobile use, since the interaction is less complex and error-prone than the interaction with multiway input devices, e.g., a 4-way
30 device.

Another embodiment of the present invention makes it possible to display twice as many list items with large images in the same screen space when compared to "traditional" list. This may reduce the need of
35 scrolling and it may help the user to anticipate the forthcoming items. Irrespective of the overlapped layout, the interaction may be handled

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with a 2-way input device (up and down), which makes the use of the list easier than the use of a grid (which use benefits of 4-way interaction) in many mobile situations.

5 The above and other objects, features and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent from the following detailed description when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

10 Fig. 1 illustrates an exemplary menu window of a mobile terminal according to an embodiment of the present invention,

Figs. 2 to 4 illustrate exemplary scrolling steps in the menu window of Fig. 1,

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Fig. 5 illustrates a second embodiment of the present invention,

Fig. 6 illustrates a third embodiment of the present invention.

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One embodiment of the present invention will be described hereinbelow with reference to the accompanying drawings. In the following description well-known functions and/or constructions will not be described in detail since they would obscure the invention.

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FIG. 1 shows a view on the display of a user interface according to one embodiment. The display could be a screen of a mobile phone or a personal digital assistant (PDA) or some other device. Said view comprises at least a list of function elements 1. Function element 1 shows information in visual format (image, picture, etc.) and in text format (letters, numbers, etc.). The visual information is shown in an "image cell" 2 of the function element 1 and the label is shown in a "label cell" 3 of the function element. This information helps the user to identify each function element as easily as possible by looking only at the image or label or both. In this embodiment there are also navigation

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aids 4 (arrows) on the display, showing the possible navigation directions.

5 The user can control the function (or functions) which is (are) connected to one function element 1 by selecting and activating the function element by a control device. The act of scrolling the menu will be explained hereinbelow. Functions of the function elements can vary depending on the solution, for example the functions can include actions such as showing a picture, running a program or calling to
10 someone. Thus the solutions which are controlled by these function elements 1 can include for example a phone number directory, an image manager, a phone manager, a message manager and an electronic organizer.

15 The list is composed of function elements 1, which "overlap" each other partially although they do not hide each other. More specifically, the display is divided into three display areas (in other words three columns). In FIG. 1 columns are named A, B and C. The outermost columns A and C are for presenting large images (the "image cells" 2),
20 and the column B between the outermost columns is reserved for the labels of the items (the "label cells" 3). The label may be, for example, the image name or creation date. Each of the function elements 1 uses space either from column A or C and from the column B. Because the function element 1 in the column A or C is higher than the element in
25 column B, the list of function elements "overlap" in column B.

Scrolling of the list starts from the left-hand function element 1, which is positioned in columns A and B, proceeding to the right-hand function element (columns B and C) and then to the next row as shown in
30 figures 2, 3 and 4, and naturally vice versa up ward. In FIG. 2 the highlighted function element 1 is the first item, and in FIG. 3 the highlighted function element is the second item, and in FIG. 4 the highlighted function element is the third item.

35 In the foregoing embodiment the scrolling is carried out in the vertical direction. That kind of two-way movement is very advantageous in

mobile devices, because displays and control devices are usually very small. Therefore, it is convenient if there are as few navigation directions as possible. In many cases 2 (or 3) –way control devices are also more reliable than multiway control devices.

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As stated hereinabove the "image cell" 2 of the function element 1 is higher than the "label cell" 3 of the function element. The label of the function element 1 is also arranged close to said image information of the function element, and thus it is very easy to see the context of the image and the label. If the label is so long in size that it cannot fit
10 between the images, it will be cut. This cutting operation can be advantageously indicated somehow, for example by three dots after the text.

15 The form of the function element 1 can vary a great deal. In one embodiment (shown in FIG. 5) perspective distortion is used for making the images narrower in order to save space for a longer text in the item label.

20 In one other embodiment, shown in FIG. 6, the screen of the device has a round shape and the menu of the user interface also has the same rounded layout (not a rectangular format as in the foregoing embodiments). Consequently, in the scope of this invention it is possible to use many different shapes, such as rectangular and/or
25 rounded shapes to form the different identification parts 2, 3.

In the foregoing embodiments image information was shown in the "image cells" 2 of the function elements 1, and information in text format was shown in the "label cells" 3 of the selection elements 1.
30 Within the scope of this invention it is also possible to use whichever of these identification parts 2, 3 to display image and/or text information. Thus the identification part 2, 3 can be an image, a picture, an icon, a symbol, a photo, a graph, text, etc. or a combination of some of the foregoing.

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By combining the modes and structures presented in connection with the different embodiments of the invention presented above, it is possible to provide various embodiments of the invention in accordance with the spirit of the invention. Therefore, the above-presented examples
5 must not be interpreted as restrictive to the invention, but the embodiments of the invention can be freely varied within the scope of the inventive features presented in the claims hereinbelow.